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2002

**Russian Military Reform:  
Empty Promises with the Wrong Focus**

by

**Kevin J. Thrash, BA**

**Thesis**

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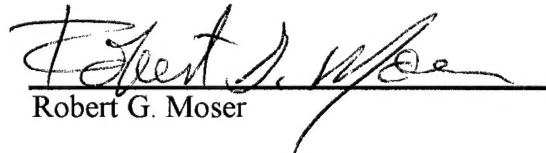
**Russian Military Reform:  
Empty Promises with the Wrong Focus**

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Robert G. Moser

## Dedication

I would like to thank my family and friends for their support and prayers. I certainly owe more to my parents than I could ever repay. I am also very grateful for the cheer and happiness my son, [REDACTED] brought me throughout the thesis process. His innocence and curiosity always made me remember that there are so many important things in life too often taken for granted. I am forever indebted to my wife [REDACTED] who always kept me grounded. Just when events would seem insurmountable, she would help me work through the issues that had grown from molehills into mountains. Her love, support, dedication and sacrifice made this graduate program not only possible and bearable but also feasible. It is to her that I dedicate this thesis. Finally, I could not have reached this point in my life without God's love, strength and guidance. To Him, I owe everything that I have and that I am.

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## Introduction

Do the Russian government and military leaders truly care about military reform or is it merely a popular topic for public speeches? If the concern is there, where should military change be focused? This thesis will show that reform is elusive for the Russian military because those in power, those responsible for the task of improving the military machine (the government and military leaders) often ignore the most fundamental part of the military structure - the individual troops themselves. It appears they assume that combat capability and defense are improved via limited purchase of more advanced hardware and material supplies and as a result of those upgrades, the reform of the troops will soon follow without any prompting from the leadership. That is a mistaken theory. It is also erroneous to suppose that troop issues will resolve themselves with the implementation of organizational changes.<sup>1</sup> Yet that is just what the Russian military presumes.

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<sup>1</sup> The topic of military reform has long been associated with the Russian military. Many statements made are rhetoric but others indicate an aspiration for true reform. The following sources are by no means conclusive, though for some salient examples see Sergey Babichev and Aleksandr Drobyshevskiy "Together We've Grown Stronger," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, August 12, 1999, p. 2; "Chief of Army's Operations Directorate Interviewed on Military Reform," *Vek*, November 24-30, 2000; "Civic Activists Storm the Kremlin," *Moscow Times*, November 22, 2001, as cited in Johnson's Russia List (hereafter JRL), No.5561 (November 22, 2001); Henry Feller, "Russian Military Reform: Mass Media Control and Information Security," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, January 2001, p. 13; Mark Galeotti, "Putin Wields his Scalpel," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Volume 13, No. 1, January 2001, pp 8-9; Major-General Anatoliy Klimenko, "Reforming Military Doctrine--Theory and Practice," *Vooruzheniye, Politika, Konversiya*, No. 2, April 1999, pp 14-17; Igor Korotchenko, "Lebed Criticizes Blueprint for Military Reform," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* 31 July, 1997, p. 2; Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Desert Storm and Its Meaning: The View from Moscow* (Santa Monica, California: RAND, 1992), p. vii; Viktor Litovkin, "The Past Seven Days and I: General Officers Alone are not Equal to the Task: Reform of the Army -- a

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian government has spoken of transformation in many areas of its influence. The armed forces are one such part. Since that time many government and defense leaders have spoken publicly about the need for the reformation of the military. Some minor modifications that amounted to mere name changes or shuffles in the chain of command occurred. One or two pieces of equipment were purchased and put into service. However, it is the troops that are most in need of attention yet they are consistently overlooked.

A decade plus is certainly enough time to have addressed military problems in earnest. Yet the absence of any substantive changes demonstrates a blatant disregard on the part the executive and legislative branches, as well as top leaders in the ministry of defense, for that reform. This paper will

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Step toward a Civilian Society Moscow," *Obshchaya Gazeta*, November 30, 2000; Yevgeniy Moskvina, "Reform: A Time to Scatter Stones, and a Time to Gather Stones -- The Second Stage of Army Reorganization is Ending, But No Changes Are Seen in the Status of Officers and Warrant Officers" *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, No. 26, July 9-15 1999, p. 1; Andrei Nikolayev, "Don't Carry Out Military Reforms with Cavalier Impulses," *Rossiyskaya Federatsiya Segodnya*, No. 4, February 1, 1999, pp 20-22. The author, a State Duma deputy and leader of the "Union of People's Power and Labor" movement noted, "Today, you can hardly find a person with common sense who does not share the idea of having an accelerated process of military reform," Oleg Odnokolenko, "Fewer, but Better and More Versatile Generals! Internal Troops Could Become Ground Forces," *Segodnya*, April 16, 1998, p. 3; William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 185-191. See also pp. 195-200 for details on a variety of "pressure groups." These voluntary organizations represent interests pro- and anti-military reform; Colonel Aleksandr Oliynik, "Are the Airborne Assault Force's Wings Reliable?" *Krasnaya Zvezda*, December 9, 1998, p. 1; "Poll Shows Russians Positive About the Armed Forces," RIA Novosti, February 17, 2000, as cited in JRL, No. 4119 (February 19, 2000). The poll demonstrates that in a year's time, those who think Russia must reform the armed forces, only dropped from 64 to 63 percent. Those against cutting the military number also stayed around previous year's results, at 70 percent; "Russian Politician Accuses Military of Deceit Over Professional Army," Interfax (Novosibirsk), November 23, 2001, as cited in JRL, No. 5562 (November 23, 2001); Vadim Solovyev, "Military Reform Remains Unapproved," *Nezavisimaya*

identify the changes that have been made to the military in the name of reform. In doing so, it will show that while those changes made an impact, it was quite a miniscule one. The purpose of this paper is to clearly shed light on the issue of reform and demonstrate that the leadership's desire for status quo (and not for change) can be seen with the examination of four social indicators. These four indicators, chosen because of their direct influence on the individual military service member, illustrate the desire for true transformation is absent.

It is not that the Russian government has no need for the armed forces as their inaction towards true reform suggests. On the contrary, it has used the military as an arm of foreign policy, for example in cooperation with the United Nation's peacekeeping efforts in the Balkans. Most visible though is the government's deployment of the ministry of defense troops in Chechnya, both from 1994-1997 (when Russian troops left Chechnya) and from 1999 to present day; the legality of which is still under scrutiny. Nevertheless, the government has shown a need for the troops.

Chapter one shows that the process hasn't been totally stagnant. There have been changes that on the surface appear to be geared towards reform. Yet these modifications were more political hype than actual intentions of development. In chapter two, the leadership of the ministry of defense is

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*Gazeta*, December 23, 2000; Anton Surikov, "Nuclear Arguments of the 'Fathers of Reform,'"

briefly examined. A succinct background survey of these individuals shows where their interests lie and whether they could be a help or hindrance to reform. It appears that the leadership of the ministry of defense is divided with regards to truly wanting change.

The analysis of the four social indicators begins with chapter three. It addresses the housing crisis within the Russian armed forces. By examining the manner in which the military shelters their members, this chapter demonstrates what level of importance people hold in that organization. Chapter four delves into the second indicator; the military pay issue plaguing the armed forces. I will break down the promises of timely pay and the pay raises, establishing that they are nothing more than empty words. In chapter five, I tackle the third indicator, that of the long-standing tradition of *dedovshchina*.<sup>2</sup> Much more than a military right of passage or good-natured initiation to build unit *esprit de corps*, *dedovshchina* is quite possibly the Russian military's most wasteful practice. By investigating the current conscription program in Russia, chapter six addresses the fourth indicator. Military service in Russia was a noble duty at one time whether it be through conscription or volunteering. Conscription did not always wrestle with such strong social defiance as it does now. Young men were proud to serve and

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*Pravda Pyat*, July 29, 1997, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> The term *dedovshchina* loosely translates as "grandfathering" in Russian and is used to describe a wide range of activities where senior troops (known as "deds") invoke their power over new

defend their country all the while building a large force of trained reserves available for call-up should the need arise. Today conscription only serves to embitter a population, abuse the young men of Russia and provide little else other than slave labor for the military brass.

These four indicators were not arbitrarily selected nor are they the only problems faced by the military.<sup>3</sup> They were chosen based on the mantra of numerous successful United States military leaders. Many leaders throughout history have stated that taking care of the troops should be the primary goal of the commander any war-fighting element to improve the unit's teamwork which increases the chances for mission success. This is usually summed up with the phrase, "Take care of the troops and they will take care of you."<sup>4</sup>

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conscripts. Often equated to hazing, its results can be much more brutal than that term encompasses.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the lack of "depolitization" of the Russian military as examined by Zoltan Barany, "Controlling the Military: A Partial Success," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1999), pp. 55-57.

<sup>4</sup> For examples of such statements from prominent U.S. military leaders see C. Tyler Jones, "Perry Receives Enlisted Honors," *Army News Service Press Release* (Washington, D.C.), Headquarters United States Army, Pentagon, January 17, 1997. Former Defense Secretary William Perry said that upon taking office he received a lot of advice, but the advice he "took to heart and used throughout his tenure" was the advice from then Sergeant Major of the Army Richard A. Kidd, "Take care of the troops, and they will take care of you." See also, Kevin Walston, *ACC Command Chief Discusses Priorities*, Air Combat Command (ACC) Public Affairs, United States Air Force, April 28, 2000. ACC's command chief master sergeant, Chief Master Sgt. Daniel M. Keane told of his foundation for leadership, "(You) need to take care of the troops and let them know how much you care about their well-being." See "Our Founding Fathers," *Air Force Village West release* (Riverside, California) 1997. General Curtis LeMay's first and foremost rule was always, "Take care of the troops." Note Linda D. Kozaryn, "Ralston Takes Command of European-Based U.S. Forces: General Wesley Clark Gives Farewell Address," American Forces Press Service (Stuttgart, Germany) May 5, 2000. General Clark remarked, "To accomplish the mission you must take care of the troops." See "The Early Retirement of Gen Ronald R. Fogleman, Chief of Staff, United States Air Force," ed. Richard H. Kohn, *Aerospace Power Journal*, Volume XV, No.1, AFRP 10-1, Spring 2001, p. 21.



Additionally, my experiences in the United States military have solidified my belief in the axiom.<sup>5</sup>

The four indicators in this thesis have an immediate bearing on the personal lives of Russian servicemen and their families. Even though conscription affects young men and their families before service in the military, it is nonetheless a personal factor. Therefore these four issues are the litmus test that illustrate the absence of the “take care of the troops” mentality and thus are the best examples that show Russia does not really want military reform.

One administrative point of order is necessary. When studying and researching this topic, it is interesting to note that many times, the term “Russian Army” will in actuality mean the entire Russian military establishment. In other words, some authors make no distinction between that particular branch of service and the others. To some (mostly those in the press corps), “Russian army” is used to identify the Ministry of Defense as a whole. To make things more clear, I differentiate between the branches of the Ministry of Defense when necessary. When I am referring to the Ministry of Defense as a whole, I will address it as the Defense Ministry, Ministry of Defense or its English translated acronym MoD.

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<sup>5</sup> To better understand the responsibilities of a successful leader, see Lieutenant Colonel John Hawkins Napier, III, *The Air Force Officer's Guide*, 27<sup>th</sup> edition, (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1986), pp 148-156.

## **Chapter One - Organizational Changes Resulting From Reform**

In January 2001, military reforms finally started in post-Soviet Russia. It was then that President Putin approved a plan for the development of the armed forces for the period between 2001-2005.<sup>6</sup> These changes included the transition of the armed forces from a four to a three branch structure consisting of the ground forces, air force and navy. The strategic missile forces were divided into two independent arms, the strategic missile forces proper and the space forces with both reporting directly to the General Staff. This subordination was solidified when Defense Minister Ivanov appointed Colonel-General Nikolai Solotsov as commander instead of making him commander-in-chief.<sup>7</sup> These two actions effectively reduced the status of the strategic missile forces, which had been the premier branch of service, enjoying benefits not seen by the other branches.

Further structural reforms included the reorganization of the Main Command of the ground forces, which was completed by December 1, 2001. The Main Command was created as the central military command and control agency that carries out direct operational leadership of the ground troops. It is

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<sup>6</sup> Andrei Korbut, "Reform Plan Released to Troops," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 14, 2001, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Sergey Ostanin, ITAR-TASS (Moscow), April 27, 2001.

responsible for troop readiness, structure, development, deployment, training, military discipline and the morale and psychological state of personnel.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover the Main Command is capable of accomplishing the entire complex of tasks for the direction of the ground troops daily activities. The troops that the Russian army is supposedly selecting are generals and officers, who have rich troop experience. While not starting from scratch, the ground troops main directorate that functioned over the course of three years is its personnel base; the majority of officers in that unit appear to be chosen because of their social acquaintance with the hierarchy rather than their field experience.<sup>9</sup>

Although there are, of course, many problems, the primary problem is the unwillingness of experienced officers to change their previous duty location and transfer to Moscow due to the limited opportunities to provide them with government housing. Unfortunately, the ground troops main command doesn't have its own housing fund.<sup>10</sup> This "reform effort" concerning the main command is a perfect example of reform with no real result. Names were changed, people shuffled, titles conferred and yet it is uneconomical due to redundancy. The

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<sup>8</sup> Aleksander Bogatyrev, "The Ground Troops Have Been Tasked?" *Krasnaya Zvezda*, December 28, 2001, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 3. See also indicator # 1 of this thesis.

division of functions between the Defense Ministry and General Staff is not complete. These agencies remain mutually duplicating.<sup>11</sup>

According to the program of optimization of the military administrative division of the country, the Volga and Urals military districts were merged on September 1, 2001. In 2001, over 70,000 posts were eliminated from the armed forces.<sup>12</sup> Reforming of the system of personnel training and military education, as well as optimization of research and development organizations and testing ranges within the Defense Ministry also began.<sup>13</sup> These changes, however, are window dressing designed to give the appearance of reform by creating "movement" in the military structure.

In August 2001, newspapers reported that the Airborne Troops Staff had received a directive from Chief of General Staff Anatoliy Kvashnin abolishing the position of deputy commander of the Airborne Troops for Peacekeeping Forces. All peacekeeping operations will henceforth be transferred to the ground forces. The position is being abolished in light of the "imminent completion of the Airborne Troops' peacekeeping activity in the Balkans."<sup>14</sup> Airborne Troops

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<sup>11</sup> "Russian Military Analysis: On Effectiveness Of Military Reforms," *Defense and Security* No. 36, trans. Pavel Pushkin, March 29, 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Ilya Bulavinov, "President Disarms Army With His Generosity," *Kommersant*, October 18, 2001, pp 1-2.

<sup>13</sup> "On Effectiveness Of Military Reforms," trans. Pavel Pushkin.

<sup>14</sup> Aleksandr Chuykov, "Musical Chairs," *Moscow Izvestiya*, August 24, 2001, p. 2.

Commander, Colonel General Georgi Shpak noted that the process would be lengthy; not to be done in one month but instead will take a year or more.<sup>15</sup>

The Airborne troops note that it is not important who will represent Russia as part of the peacekeeping forces in Yugoslavia -- whether it is paratroopers or motorized infantrymen. However, even the infantrymen admit that they still have no professionally trained peacekeeping units. This category of military work has been mainly the province of the "blue berets." Almost 4,000 paratroopers are in Kosovo and Bosnia, and a "blue beret" battalion is part of the CIS Collective Forces keeping the peace in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict zone. As for the ground forces, they are represented by just a single battalion in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict zone and a battalion of the 58th Combined Arms Army (Vladikavkaz) that is part of the Mixed Forces keeping the peace in the Georgia-South Ossetia conflict zone. Russian peacekeepers in Sierra Leone are represented by a helicopter detachment from the Army Aviation.<sup>16</sup>

The ground forces are now taking urgent measures to make sure that they are up to the task. A center for training personnel for participation in the Kosovo peacekeeping operation has been set up in Tver. The concern is that there will be casualties and people will most likely be killed. Apart from anything else, the post of "chief peacekeeper" will yield certain political dividends. For example,

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<sup>15</sup> "Russian Ground Force charged with peacekeeping instead of Airborne Troops," Moscow NTV program broadcast on 1 August 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Chuykov, p. 2.

direct contact with the president who, as is well known, is very fond of visiting Russian subunits in “hot spots.”<sup>17</sup> Changing those responsible for peacekeeping duties is an example of a positive reform; that of freeing the limited number of airborne troops to train for what they were established to do; rapidly deploy and control the situation until the appropriate ground forces arrive. The successful transfer of this mission is hampered by the lack of training required for the ground forces. Yet, the mission is being pushed to an army that is still unprepared for it.

It would be erroneous to say that these reforms are not beneficial. Certainly some provide manning and/or financial relief. However, the overall impact of the majority of these reforms has been cosmetic and at times apparently only politically motivated. None of them impacted the real roadblock to reform in the Russian military because not one of the major reforms proudly announced by the political leadership answered the most basic of questions. What is being done to take care of the troops?

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter Two - Leadership and the Reform Effort**

Understanding the person in a leadership role is critical for anticipating their potential courses of action or reactions in any given situation. Individuals bring with them different opinions, varied backgrounds and experiences. Knowing the personal and career background of the leadership of Russia's ministry of defense is important because it allows one to make an educated guess as to that organization's direction and future actions. It can also give us insight as to their preferred method of managing programs, such as funding. For instance, if an officer came up through the ranks working in, commanding, supporting and maintaining tanks, it is likely that they will pay more attention to the armored community than would an artillery officer whose background is obviously different. This point merely identifies the parochialism that exists in the military.

Former Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev serves as the perfect illustration of this point. During his tenure (1997-2001), Russia had four branches of service, the Strategic Rocket Forces being one of them. Based on his background as the former commander-in-chief of that branch, it was no surprise that, as defense minister, he argued against major strategic missile cuts and for a merger of all three nuclear wings (sea-based, land-based and air launched nuclear weapons) under one command separate from the other branches.

This chapter is not purely biographical. It will, however, briefly review the key ministry of defense leaders and note what separates them from their peers and predecessors regarding military reform. In some cases, projections are made about their future. This chapter only covers the defense ministry leader. Interesting projections could be made about President Putin and some of the lawmakers, but for the purposes of brevity those leaders will not be covered here.

On March 28, 2001, Sergei Ivanov made history by becoming the first civilian Minister of Defense (whether it be for Russia or the former Soviet Union). Many saw this as a good sign that the civil-military relations would improve and that civilian control over the military would come to fruition. Certainly he has some interest in successfully implementing military reform because he previously served as the head of the military reform commission. If for nothing else, implementation of his committee's ideas would validate his work there.

However, there are a couple of points of contention regarding his ability to productively lead the military. The first point is that he has no military background whatsoever. In fact, the closest he has been to the military is that he held the rank of General-Lieutenant in the KGB. This is not to suggest that to perform well as the Minister of Defense one needs to have served in the military. However, the fact is that he is in a position over generals who were brought up and trained under military control. For the first civilian minister of defense to



have no first hand knowledge of military life or have experienced what the servicemen he leads are going through is perhaps not the wisest move. Additionally, he is at a minimum seven year younger than his immediate subordinates. This can be another growing pain for which the generals and admirals have to adjust. His performance as minister of defense leaves much to be desired. While there have been organizational changes during his tenure, some were accomplished by his subordinates and many of the military's problems remain unattended. Should he remain at his post beyond 2003, it will only be because of his close friendship with President Putin and not because of the reforms he has managed to enact.

The Chief of the General Staff General Anatoliy Kvashin is probably best known for his public struggle with then minister of defense Sergeyev regarding Russia's strategic nuclear weapons. Although Yeltsin appointed him, Putin firmly backed Kvashin during that battle; the result was Kvashin got what he wanted and Sergeyev submitted his resignation. Kvashin's strong support for the reduction of nuclear weapons and the subordination of the Strategic Rocket Forces make him one of the leading reformers in the defense ministry. Though to be certain, he is not behind every reform program necessary. Moreover, it is he and not Minister Ivanov who is credited with the merger of two military districts (Volga and Urals) into one, freeing up hundreds of headquarters staff and funding for use

elsewhere.<sup>18</sup> Kvashin is in a position of considerable influence and most likely will be there for a while longer. President Putin likes his initiatives, he is respected by many in the military community and most importantly, for Russian military officers at least, he is four years away from mandatory retirement.

General Nikolai Kormiltsev is the popular ground forces Commander-in-Chief (CINC). He is known as a soldier's soldier because he has operated in several military districts and at every level of command. Probably the most important point to make about him is that less than a month after his March 2001 appointment to his current position, he was further promoted. President Putin appointed him as a Deputy Minister of Defense. This appointment is extremely important because according to the Russian military's hierarchy, Kormiltsev will now be able to by-pass Kvashnin in the decision-making process and will report directly to Ivanov. By appointing Kormiltsev a Deputy Minister of Defense, Putin demonstrated a high level of confidence in the General. This shouldn't be a problem in the foreseeable future though. Kormiltsev and Kvashin share like views on military reform and will most likely not be at loggerheads with each other.

The most recent appointment to the Russian military branch leadership circle is General Vladimir Mikhaylov, Russia's Air Force Commander-in-Chief.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Viktor Sokirko, "Military 'Mole,'" *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, November 3, 2001, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> He replaced General Anatoliy Kornukov as Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force. Kornukov received his reputation as the general who directed the final stage of the interception and

The general, appointed in January 2002, gained his fame for his operations in Chechnya. More specifically, he accomplished over 40 combat missions himself and was directly involved in the elimination of Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev; it is for this act that he received the gold star of the Hero of Russia on June 13, 1996.<sup>20</sup> Mikhaylov's appointment to the post of commander-in-chief is more of a compromise, indicating that the Defense Ministry's "reserve bench" essentially has been emptied. The fact is that the question of an extension of his term of service will be decided for him in one and one-half years when he reaches 60 years of age. As a CINC, Mikhaylov dutifully notes that "aviation is not experiencing the best of times" while also saying "the greatness and might of Russia as a world power largely are determined by the power of its armed forces and of the air force, their most important component."<sup>21</sup> It is doubtful he will have any lasting impact on military reforms because he won't be in his position long enough to enact any long-term policies.

It is interesting to note that while Admiral Vladimir Kuroyedov, the Naval Commander-in-Chief for Russia has quite a bit of operational experience, he only served primarily in the Pacific Fleet. Granted the Russian navy is a shell of its former self, though when Admiral Kuroyedov was coming through the ranks,

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destruction of Korean airliner flight KE007 on August 31, 1983. Kornukov was retired upon "attaining maximum age."

<sup>20</sup> See "Russian Air Force Commander helped eliminate Chechen separatist leader Dudayev," *Agentstvo Voyennykh Novostey*, January 23, 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Dmitriy Safonov and Aleksandr Chuykov, "New CINC Air Force Appointed," *Moscow Izvestiya* January 23, 2002, p. 4.

there were numerous other fleets in which to serve. These include the Black Sea Fleet, which at one time was quite formidable, and the Northern Fleet that still is a very viable force. Growing up in one fleet does not give the admiral a broad base from which to lead. That narrow experience could raise some morale issues regarding preferential treatment of one fleet over another. As he was appointed in November 1997, he is the only remaining "non-Putin" appointee among the CINCs. And despite the purges of the naval leadership after the Kursk tragedy, he remains in his position. While this demonstrates Putin's regard for him, he has no reputation for supporting reform.

In reference to reform, it appears that the leadership of the ministry of defense is divided. The two true reformers, Kvashin and Kormiltsev have position and rank over those who appear to be less reform minded, Mikhaylov and Kuroyedov. Ivanov, though not a fence sitter by exact definition, seems to be content making speeches proclaiming reform yet not really doing much about it. Perhaps it is wise to keep Kvashin and Kormiltsev in their respective positions to hopefully stir some sort of change in the military. The ministry of defense leadership has quite a bit of power to make some significant changes or to block them.

### **Chapter Three - Indicator # 1: The Housing Crisis**

Life here is just like the surviving the Leningrad blockade during World War II, only then they had the Neva River. We don't.

A soldier's wife describes housing life in Naro-Fominsk<sup>22</sup>

The disregard the government has for those in the armed forces shows in the accommodations of those troops. The housing situation for the military is deplorable. A problem that spans years, there are still thousands of military members and their families without places to live. Moreover, some of those that do have roofs over their heads live in squalor. In true bureaucratic fashion, the hierarchy and operation of the housing organization is convoluted. Many times, one organ does not know what the other is doing leaving those with the problem to suffer. One government "solution" to the crisis was to issue housing certificates. However, the process to use housing certificates is nightmarish. Indicator number four focuses on the housing crisis, its causes, implications and possible solutions.

One of the reasons for the crisis is that the Russian government underestimates the true needs of the servicemen. For example, the housing program was intended to solve the housing problem for only 210,000 families. Yet adding the figures from the end of 1997 to the 1998 figures of those discharged due to personnel cuts, the total grows to around 434,000 families in

need of housing or housing repair.<sup>23</sup> Yet, if the program were running perfectly, it would only provide help to less than half of those families, and the timetable was scheduled to take five years.

Some servicemen were lucky, of course, and they received housing. The rest got certificates. They have been able to watch another hoax played out--this time it is the "certification" of each serviceman's family.<sup>24</sup> Each will get a certificate instead of an apartment, and the problem of providing soldiers and servicemen in the reserves with homes, judging by all indications, will not be solved. This still holds true. More than 70,000 families are subject to eviction from more than 10,000 closed military garrisons "as having lost their connection with the Armed Forces." Added to these are 365,000 officers and warrant officers who, as already announced, will be discharged before the end of 2002. And in the units themselves, 96,000 officers have no roof over their heads, and languish in dormitories and rebuilt barracks.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See Lyuba Pronina, "Army Wives' Barrack Town Misery," *The Russia Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 39, November 22-28, 1999.

<sup>23</sup> Aleksandr Korzhakov, "A Certificate Instead of an Apartment," *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, March 3, 1998, p. 2. The number breaks down as follows: 117,300 families had no homes, 56,600 needed better housing, around 170,000 servicemen were discharged without receiving any housing, and 63,300 families of officers, warrant officers, and career servicemen lost their connection to the Armed Forces and had to be moved out of military communities. In 1998 another 27,000 officers, warrant officers, and career servicemen were discharged as a result of personnel cuts.

<sup>24</sup> The term "hoax" refers to the voucher program brought about by privatization. For an excellent account of the reform in Russia which began a decade ago, see Rose Brady, *Kapitalizm: Russia's Struggle to Free its Economy* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1999).

<sup>25</sup> Nikolay Poroskov, "Will Major Ivanov Become a Swineherd?" *Vek*, November 9, 2001.

Lack of funding for new construction or to finish flats already under construction is another thorn in the side of the armed forces. The 2001 budget provided a total of 10.1 billion rubles for capital construction and national defense, which is enough to build apartments only for 8,000 servicemen. Because of this shortfall, the defense minister asked for 3.2 billion rubles of additional revenues that were intended for realization of the housing certificates program. The ministry used the money to fund housing. The ministry of defense was able to build two times more apartments in Moscow than could have been bought under the housing certificates program.<sup>26</sup> In fact the housing certificate program needed a large sum of itself money to approach meeting its meager goal. Cynically, it is the banks that benefit most from the government program for the acquiring housing for the families of servicemen. It will take 31.75 billion rubles to fund the program entirely, which presupposes the solicitation of 6.35 billion rubles in long-term loans (though where possible, the personal funds of citizens, too) and 25.4 billion rubles from federal budget sources.<sup>27</sup>

Contributing to the housing shortage are the families who remain in their base quarters even after discharge. As a rule, members leaving the military are supposed to collect accommodation vouchers and use them to buy an apartment or

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<sup>26</sup> "Defense Minister Sergeyev Asks for More Money from Budget for Housing," *Agentstvo Voyennoykh Novostey*, November 28, 2000, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Korzhakov, p. 2.

house off base but these vouchers don't represent much money. Practically for the family, it is logical, there is no need to move when one already has a place to live. Therefore, service members stay where they are, and the population on base grows with the influx of new troops.<sup>28</sup>

The fact that military housing construction units must compete with civilian housing construction units adds another slant to the housing crisis. The biggest problem for the military construction unit lies with the transition of the country's economy to a market economy. There was a fundamental change in the system of managing material resources and providing them to military construction organizations. The military shifted from centralized supply to direct contracts. This allowed the builders to purchase materials and machinery then transport them without military prompting or assistance. Although the center is gradually losing distributive functions it still involves itself with the issues of planning centralized investments and forecasting prospects for development of capital construction and of the production base. Eventually, civilian construction firms will be hired by the defense ministry to build facilities for the Russian military.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, the military construction units will be left mainly with building in difficult to access, remote areas and the maintenance of these regions.

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<sup>28</sup> Vladimir Mukhin, "Russian Officers' 'Comfortable' Life, Thanks to Germany," *The Russia Journal*, Vol. 3, No.5, February 14, 2000, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> Viktor Kutishchev, "Right to Housing: What Is Said and What Is Reality," *Armeyskiy Sbornik*, No. 6, May 25, 1995, p. 2.



As it has in other areas, erratic financing placed the military housing construction complex in debt to suppliers of construction materials, equipment and transport.

No facet of the Russian military would be complete without its link to corruption. Lack of military housing aside, the construction industry is ripe with dishonesty. From 1992 to 1997, the Russian government received loans from German banks to finance construction of the flats. According to the figures released by the audit chamber, of all the housing space built during that time period for the Russian Defense Ministry, only 2.5 percent was financed by the German loan of 635 million deutsch marks (approximately \$301.5 million).<sup>30</sup> In other words, German money helped build only 5,067 out of 204,900 flats to accommodate the military and at the same time, the price of one square meter in these apartments was 3.6 times more expensive than the average cost of the apartment space in Russia.<sup>31</sup> The auditors linked the high costs to the German firms hired to build the flats. They imported much of the material instead of buying locally. The import of material also produced an unexpected side effect - those materials were not designed for and therefore unsuited for Russian winters; they began to crack and break. The total amount of losses incurred after Russia

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<sup>30</sup> "Russia Probes Use Of Loans For Army's Housing," UPI (Moscow), February 9, 2001, as cited in JRL, No. 5084 (February 10, 2001).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

repays the loans in full will be around 5.5 billion rubles (approximately \$193 million) - an amount that would have financed 11,000 more flats.<sup>32</sup>

Members stationed at the Gagarin Air Force Academy just outside of Moscow were investigated for the illegal distribution of flats. Some officials misappropriated the Academy's funds to improve housing conditions of their family members. Additionally 17 flats were handed over to construction companies illegally. The end result being that over 200 Academy staff have no flats. Four generals and nine senior officers of the Academy were blamed but no charges have been brought as of yet.<sup>33</sup>

In June 1997, Admiral Khmelnov, former commander of the Pacific Fleet, was accused of illegally selling 64 ships (most significantly, two large aircraft carriers, the Minsk and the Novorossiysk) to India and South Korea. Khmelnov said he intended on spending the funds earned from the sales on building apartments for officers.<sup>34</sup> The carrier deal was stopped before it got too far, but the price of the carriers, according to the charge, was extremely low (the carriers were being sold to the Indians as "scrap"). For the money received from South Korea, though, several houses were, indeed, built in Vladivostok, however, the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> "Illegal Distribution of Housing Exposed in Gagarin Air Force Academy," *Agentstvo Voennoykh Novostey*, December 27, 2000, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Boris Reznik, "The Admirals Have Their Honor, but the Sailors Have Nothing to Eat," *Izvestiya*, June 3, 1997, p. 5.

Admiral personally distributed these apartments among his personal friends and colleagues.<sup>35</sup>

Stories about corruption in the army regularly appear in the Russian mass media. But these stories have given only a fragmentary conception of the extent of the corruption among the Defense Ministry's highest officials. A journalist, Alexander Zhilin, obtained a document from the General Staff detailing the abuse of official position by various officials of the Russian Defense Ministry. More specifically, it was a list of officials in the ministry of defense and the General Staff who, from 1992-1995 were suspected or charged by "competent law-enforcement organs and the mass media" of illegal activities. Pertinent to this section was an entry on then Minister of Defense, General Grachev who allegedly "illegally acquired a Mercedes staff car with funds intended for housing construction for servicemen of the Western Group of forces." Apparently though the criminal case was "frozen" by the Prosecutor General's office.<sup>36</sup>

In order to fix the problem of so many homeless, there is an easy solution that only adds to the housing predicament. Simply pass legislation that makes the homeless "disappear" on paper; and that is exactly what was done. Formerly, the lists of those with housing issues were divided into three categories: servicemen

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<sup>35</sup> Yevgeniy Krutikov, "White Man's Criminal Burden: The Charge Against Admiral Khmel'nov as a Symbol of the End of the Colonial Era," *Segodnya*, June 18, 1997, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Aleksandr Zhilin, "Corruption Keeps Generals In Line," *The Jamestown Foundation Prism*, September 22, 1995. Others were less convinced, saying Grachev's "involvement remained ambiguous." See William E. Odom and Robert Dujarric, *Commonwealth or Empire? Russia, Central Asia, and the Transcaucasus* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hudson Institute, 1997), p. 137.

without housing (homeless); servicemen needing improved housing conditions (for example, awaiting enlargement of their living space); servicemen enjoying certain benefits (such as housing in need of minor repair).

On February 15, 2000, Defense Minister order number 80 entitled “On the Procedure for Providing Living Accommodations in the RF Armed Forces,” was published and made the category solely encompassing the homeless officers proper (the first category of the three noted above) ceased to exist. Now there is one common waiting list, which isn’t differentiated by officers who have no housing at all and officers awaiting improved housing conditions. Therefore there’s no need even to name a nonexistent category.<sup>37</sup>

Housing certificates, when they are distributed, are no guarantee of housing. The certificate undertaking, very similar to the infamous voucher adventure, was doomed to failure early on, since only 80 percent of the costs of the apartment were paid by the state, the rest by the officer. Many of them, not having that kind of money, preferred to wait for the free housing authorized by the Constitution and the law “On Service Member Status.”<sup>38</sup> And indeed, the state did not sustain the program financially, allocating far fewer certificates than were required. The certificates and the market cost of housing were in clear contradiction.

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<sup>37</sup> Vladimir Kutsevskiy, “Question and Answer for the President: The State’s Concern for its Defenders is Determined Above All by its Monetary Value,” *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, December 28, 2001, p. 1.

Basically, the housing certificate program stipulates that for the first three months the member participating in the program will seek ways of solving their own housing problem. They are free to choose any method of acquiring housing; for example, they are entitled to buy any new or used home. The service member may also agree in advance to buy living space in a residential building under construction. If this is the case, at least 80 percent of the construction work must have been completed. Because the funds may not be used to finance new construction, the discharged serviceman who wants to build his own home will not be entitled to a subsidy. According to the program, the former serviceman who has already begun building a home but does not have enough money to finish the job is also not eligible for assistance. However, both have a right to get a certificate, they just can't do anything with it. After the three month house hunting period, the member is to draft an agreement with the owner of the building. Although the agreement states the purchase price, the date of the offer to buy the dwelling, etc it does not guarantee the ability to buy housing. This decision will be made elsewhere.<sup>39</sup>

The agreement between the prospective tenant and landlord is then submitted to a bank. Based on several factors, one being the possibility of completing the construction work on schedule, the bank decides whether the applicant will be able to buy the home and is capable of finding the rest of the

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<sup>38</sup> Poroskov, p 1.

money required to pay for his chosen apartment in the building under construction. The bank extending the mortgage for the unsubsidized portion of the purchase price will partially own the dwelling. Should the service member fall behind in payments, the bank has the authority to repossess the flat.<sup>40</sup> This is not a new concept but in the Russian military when pay runs late, it is a hazard that could have some bad consequences.

To grasp the enormity of the housing problem, it is necessary to shed light on situations even where people do have legitimate roofs over their heads. Many personnel live in aging and cramped barracks or even old warships. "Conditions here are not exactly great," said one officer at a dormitory facility on the outskirts of Moscow. "There is only one toilet per floor, and 40 people live on each floor." He said he had lived in the same dorm room with his wife for the past three years but still had no immediate prospect of getting anything more comfortable.<sup>41</sup>

Approximately 70 kilometers southwest of Moscow is the town of Naro-Fominsk; home to the families of the elite Kantemirovskaya Division and 119th Paratroop Regiment (who fought in Dagestan and Chechnya). The wives of the soldiers say that they live in conditions close to those in the battlefield. For two weeks after a pipe burst, they had no running water, hot or cold. The lack of water forced them to line up for water brought in by the fire brigade. But even

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<sup>39</sup> Korzhakov, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

without a burst pipe, most of the families living in nine-story apartment blocks do not enjoy running water for much of the year because the local water station does not have enough power to pump water up from ground level to every floor. The heat and electricity operate sporadically meaning that portable wood heaters and candles are always at the ready. The building elevator does not work forcing one woman to "lift her baby stroller to the sixth floor."<sup>42</sup> Even with these atrocious living conditions, many of the families in Naro-Fominsk consider themselves luckier than those living in the regimental barracks. The barracks are described as a big room separated from the others by thin walls, with a communal toilet and a sink. One wife said, "Everyone says it's an elite division. Yes, but only in name."<sup>43</sup>

The housing situation certainly presents a dilemma for recruiters. Convincing someone that a career in the military where housing is guaranteed but often not provided is no small task. Joining an organization that is known for not taking care of its people is not a wise course of action.

The housing crisis is not without solutions as bitter as some of them may be. First and foremost the government needs to admit that the housing certificates did not work. Leaders are good at noting that its successes have been less than anticipated. But the correct answer is, housing certificates are worth less than the

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<sup>41</sup> Adam Tanner, "Nearly 100,000 Russian Officers Without Apartments," Reuters (Moscow) July 29, 1999, as cited in JRL, No. 3413 (July 29, 1999).

<sup>42</sup> For in depth details, see Pronina.

paper on which they are printed. Limited options, convoluted time constraints, heavy bank involvement and a goal short of the true requirements of the military members point to a need to drop this program as a political panacea.

One possible course of action is to increase funding and actually spend that money to build or procure housing. The military knows how many families are without housing. That is not the issue. The military also has construction units capable of building housing, in some cases cheaper than their civilian counterparts. What it doesn't have is the complete financial backing of the government. If that backing still does not come, the military must divert funds from other projects. Purchasing sophisticated weapons systems does no good if the troops are demoralized to the point of not caring about their duties. Lack of housing would demoralize anyone who believes that they are doing their patriotic duty to the state and yet the state cares nothing about their well-being.

In this regard, the Ministry of Defense leadership is taking steps to find new, non-traditional approaches to solving this problem. They call for a transition to providing service housing to service members for their period of military service, and accumulation of funds in personal housing accounts allowing them to acquire permanent housing when they are discharged to the reserve or retired. Titled the Cumulative Housing Program (CHP) the basis lies in continuous accumulation of funds in personal housing accounts for service members during

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<sup>43</sup> Pronina.



their period of military service and residence in service housing. This will allow them to acquire permanent housing in their chosen place of residence by the time they are discharged to the reserve or retirement, which in turn will be a necessary condition for guaranteed vacation of the service housing in garrisons and closed military camps.<sup>44</sup> This idea has merit but does not address the grafting of money, which is ever present. Nor does it take into account the ongoing problem of funds not being distributed, disbursed late or just plain less than originally stipulated.

Among the proposals are many radical ones, such as the suggestion to set a 5 percent tax on super-expensive construction. In Russia around 7,000 cottages costing \$500,000 are built every year. Premises in capital and oblast centers, from which military institutions were quietly coaxed, are sold as offices for commercial structures. Some recommend collecting a percentage for "military construction" from these sums. The same for the tens of thousands of square meters confiscated from crooks. Authorized privatization of living space in military garrisons, which have lost closed garrison status, is another proposal. These garrisons should be turned over to the organs of authority or local self-government.<sup>45</sup>

Some government officials use statistics to put a positive spin on the lack of housing. Others, for example those with no housing, create a "worst case"

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<sup>44</sup> "How the Housing Problem Will Be Solved in the Russian Army," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, June 28 1997, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Poroskov.

scenario and can exaggerate the actual predicament. Suffice it to say that even one service member without housing should be unacceptable. Nonetheless, regardless of whose figures you believe, there are significant numbers of homeless or those whose homes need repair in Russia's military.

The reduction in numerical strength of personnel within the scope of armed forces reform with regards to the housing issue is reminiscent of the withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact countries. As it did then, the armed forces owe these servicemen housing and the cutback exacerbates the problem of providing housing to homeless servicemen even more. The situation is aggravated by the fact that up to the present time there has been no success in reducing the waiting list for housing among civilians previously discharged from military service and registered to receive housing in local government institutions, as well as no success in resettling persons who have lost ties with the ministry of defense out of departmental housing from closed military posts.<sup>46</sup>

Providing servicemen, both active duty and retired, with housing is a serious social problem, Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov said while opening a regular meeting of the Russian government. In the opinion of the Prime Minister, the reform of the Russian armed forces is directly linked with providing military officers housing, because the transformation of the Russian military will include a

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<sup>46</sup> Vladimir Georgiyev, "Legions of Homeless Officers: The Ministry of Defense Did Not Receive a Ruble for Capital Construction During This Year," *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, June 21-27, 1997, p. 3.

reduction in its numerical strength. Kasyanov said that the 2002 draft budget envisaged a certain increase in the financing of the program, which is still below the needed level.<sup>47</sup> That will be of little comfort to the military family without water or electricity.

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<sup>47</sup> "Reduction In Forces - Still Have To Provide Housing, Certificates Are Nice... Where Are The Flats?" ITAR-TASS (Moscow), November 1, 2001.

## Chapter Four - Indicator # 2: Military Pay and Financial Benefits

If the financing of military reform is not changed radically, the country should forget about its defense capacity.

Alexei Arbatov <sup>48</sup>

In almost all cases, to say that more money could make life better is an understatement. It can be argued that the battle for money is a battle for survival of any organization and within the Russian military, it is no different. Yet it is not merely the entire organization that suffers. It is the individual many times who bears the brunt. In fact, financial woes for military members are becoming more commonplace. Optimistically, in November 2000, *Voyeninform* predicted that because there are high numbers of people to be cut from the armed forces in the name of reform and budget funds allocated to various departments will remain at the same level meaning per capita servicemen's allowances will go up. The positive figures connote allowances will double, by the year 2005, and to triple, by the year 2010. By 2005, the ratio between the shares of the military budget spent on the maintenance of the personnel and on the logistical support of forces and units should undergo a substantial change. Five years from now, this ratio is projected to change from 70/30 percent to a more optimum 50/50 percent

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<sup>48</sup> "Duma Committee: 1999 Defense Budget Woefully Insufficient," Interfax (Moscow), December 2, 1998.

allowing for a more balanced approach to obligating military money. But that supposition is a bit premature.

In many cases, pay is not received until months after it is due. More often than not, the government owes salaries to those hired or drafted to defend the country. In the first half of 1995, the average pay owed to servicemen was between 1-2 million rubles.<sup>49</sup> When the pay actually arrives a few months down the road, inflation takes its toll. Given the erratic nature of inflation in Russia, it is not uncommon to see as much as \$100 difference between when the pay was due and when it was actually received. By April 1998, the amount due to defense ministry servicemen changed very little. At that time the government's debt to the troops was 1.65 billion rubles, which is 16 times greater than the amount owed to any other department within the government.<sup>50</sup>

Yet the government still makes headlines announcing the payment of salaries owed much less offering pay increases. This rhetoric is terrific campaign fodder and is a stick with which to keep the masses at bay. President Putin personally addressed a group of kontraktniki who had been fighting in Chechnya and promised them that their combat bonuses would finally be paid. Those were the lucky ones. There were military personnel who were enticed to serve as peacekeepers in Abkhazia for an additional \$20 dollars per day. Yet in violation

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<sup>49</sup> Marybeth Peterson Ulrich, "Democracy And Russian Military Professionalism: Why Full NATO Partnership Is Still A Long Way Off," *Air Power Journal*, Special Edition 1996, p. 4.

of a finance ministry decree, they only received around \$0.70 per day; the total owed to the peacekeepers is an almost unbelievable sum of \$500 million that went elsewhere in the ministry of defense.<sup>51</sup> It seems ludicrous to short change the organization which holds the keys to the nations weapons stockpile and whose people are in the business of fighting. Even when they are paid, Putin noted that 40 percent of those in service have a standard of living lower than the national average.<sup>52</sup>

All too frequently promises of pay raises are broken, yet when they do materialize, other benefits are cut. In December 1998, former president Boris Yeltsin signed a decree entitled "On raising the salaries of servicemen and others." The goal, although it did not come to fruition, was that in January 1999 the monthly salaries of servicemen, depending on the posts in which they serve, would be raised by 62 percent and in July 1999 raise their salaries by 102 percent according to the military titles they have earned.<sup>53</sup> Another facet if this decree was to pay those stationed abroad in local foreign money, a novel concept, in accordance with the stated goals (salary according to the occupied post, etc). Yet that did not happen either.

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<sup>50</sup> Vladimir Yermolin, "New Government Starts With Demilitarization of Budget," *Russkii Telegraf*, April 10, 1998, p 3.

<sup>51</sup> Peacekeeping forces in Transdnistr, Tajikistan and South Ossetia were treated similarly. See "What the Papers Say," *Versiya* via ISI Defense and Security Database, February 22, 2002.

<sup>52</sup> See *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newslines* (hereafter *RFE/RL Newslines*), Part I, Vol. 5, No. 91, May 14, 2001.

The promises continue to fly. Very few government officials stand up without saying that military salaries and special bonuses will be raised over time. A salary boost, which began in Jan 2002, increased hazardous duty pay from between 30-50 percent of their base pay to 70 percent.<sup>54</sup> Another special pay program implemented in January is known as "commander pay" is given to junior officers and is based on the number of troops the particular individual commands (pay ranges from 300-500 rubles per month). Beginning in July 2002, the plan is that servicemen's wages will increase according to post, be adjusted for length of time in service and will be brought into line with wages of state employees (who are paid at a higher rate). The real gem to the program is that at this point (July 2002) the current bonuses of compensations for the income tax and payments for housing, telephone and public utilities services will stop. Therefore in July, though they will earn approximately twice as much as they do now, they will have to pay the 13 percent income tax, pay for their own housing and utilities which, if they are lucky, might evenly balance out with their pay "increase." The one step in the right direction for this program focuses on the group of officers who are the most prone to leave the service. Junior officers will fair a little better financially than senior officers because at least they will have an opportunity for commander

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<sup>53</sup> "Yeltsin Decree on Raising Servicemen's Salaries," ITAR-TASS (Moscow), December 25, 1998.

<sup>54</sup> "Russian Military Analysis: Russia Saves Money on Defense," *Defense and Security* No. 128, trans. Pavel Pushkin, November 2, 2001.

pay. The government did not really provide a pay raise but instead a pay shuffle for most and a pay cut for others.

If they are fortunate enough to receive their pay, some servicemen have to use their money to buy equipment or supplies for their unit. All too common are the stories of officers going home on leave, only to return with "presents." This does not mean gifts from home but ammunition carriers and spare camouflage suits for themselves and their troops. Other popular items that were procured through personal financing were coats, boots and the occasional flak jacket (or bullet proof vest), which could be bought on the black market. Troops in Chechnya were known to have purchased parts for broken down trucks or food products from local Chechen merchants with their own money because rear services simply don't provide what's necessary.<sup>55</sup>

Much of the problem stems from a simple lack of money and the improper distribution of the money that is allotted. In 1998, Deputy Chairman of the State Duma's Defense Committee Alexei Arbatov publicly stated that the funds earmarked for national defense in Russia's budget plan for 1999 are extremely insufficient. The presidentially decreed 3.5 percent of the GDP has never been realized and with the behemoth of a military that is in Russia now, it is doubtful that figure would be enough anyway. Additionally, Putin's pay raise project that

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<sup>55</sup> See Vadim Udmantsev, "Chechen 'Resorts, Where Russian Defense Ministry Servicemen and Border Guard Troops Receive an Identical 'Inoculation' Against Service," *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, November 16, 2001.



began in January 2002 is feared to have a negative impact on the Russian budget as a whole. The Finance Ministry expressed its doubts and stated that such measures would require a state budget increase of at least 10 percent.<sup>56</sup> This concern is certainly valid given that even without the increase in salaries, wages are in arrears.

Another roadblock regarding the salary and bonus debacle is the Duma. By enacting one of their limited controls over the military they can force their will on other issues pertaining to defense.<sup>57</sup> With the military resolutely under Presidential control (instead of the shared authority of the executive and legislative branches), the Duma has little other recourse than to impose its will regarding the military by using the budget as its weapon. Finally, the process of distributing funds can adversely affect military pay when politics come between ministries (those of defense and finance specifically). As of December 1998, only one third of the funds allotted for the armed forces had been disbursed.<sup>58</sup> Is two-thirds really better than none? The Russian Duma, after thinking it had approved a manageable defense budget for 2002, just discovered that the 2001 budget actually was funded only at 67 percent, despite a reported surplus. Deputy Duma Speaker Georgi Boos revealed these new statistics and said that the military-

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<sup>56</sup> "Military Pay Raise Could Sabotage Russian Budget," *RFE/RL Newsline*, Part I, Vol. 6, No. 52, March 19, 2002.

<sup>57</sup> For an interesting examination on the Duma's budget control of the armed forces, see Zoltan Barany, *Politics and the Russian Armed Forces, Russian Politics: Challenges of Democratization* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp 188-191.

industrial complex also was affected by the shortfall. Not only have military personnel been underpaid, but also defense industry personnel payrolls are between two to six months behind.<sup>59</sup> President Putin did publicly reprimand the Finance Ministry, if somewhat for the benefit of the generals in the armed forces. Directly chastising the Minister of Finance himself, the president expressed his displeasure with the disbursement process for payment of service members. He finished his rebuke by stating in no uncertain terms, if the ministry of finance can do no better, through the course of military reforms, "we will improve you."<sup>60</sup>

No pay, late pay and broken promises of incentive pay understandably have a negative effect on troop performance. The continual dangling of the proverbial carrot only to have it yanked away will eventually take its toll. It is not enough that the troops endure life in a military wrought with *dedovshchina*, antiquated equipment and the ever-present battles in Chechnya. Morale among the troops has deteriorated. Clearly a sign that the money is insufficient among military troops is the soldier or sailor who is forced to moonlight. Examples of officers working after duty as taxi cab drivers and sergeants moonlighting as waiters shed some light into the financial straits faced by service members. One

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<sup>58</sup> "Duma Committee: 1999 Defense Budget Woefully Insufficient," Interfax (Moscow), December 2, 1998.

<sup>59</sup> See "What the Papers Say," *Kommersant* via ISI Defense and Security Database, February 20, 2002.

<sup>60</sup> Andrei Korbuto and Sergey Sokut, "President Orders Reforms to Start. And On the Whole, He Told the Military Chiefs What They Wanted To Hear," *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, November 24, 2000. See also Yelena Korop, Aleksandr Sadchikov, and Dmitriy Safonov, "Unrest Among the Crew" *Izvestiya*, October 19, 2001.

lieutenant, in order to make ends meet for his wife and child worked all day on base. Then at night he would work a six-hour shift before coming home late. His routine began again the next morning. Does one really want a tired officer leading a nuclear missile silo? As if moonlighting to supplement one's wages weren't enough, some servicemen are seen begging in the street. Additionally, servicemen home on leave often need to beg for money from their relatives. This is not luxury money to be spent on an evening at the club. It is used to buy food for their families or clothes for them to wear.

What can be done to curb the pay issues faced by the military? The clearest cut solution is to unwrap the web of red tape that surrounds the actual distribution of funds. Right now it likens a shell game. The 2001 National Defense portion was originally set at 214.7 billion rubles, which is 2.77 percent of the gross domestic product.<sup>61</sup> But according to the chairman of the Defense Committee of the State Duma, General Andrei Nikolayev, if the national defense matters supported by other line items, such as the 4.2 billion rubles allocated under the Military Reform section and the 1.2 billion rubles for the military program of the Ministry of Atomic Energy Russia, are included the total figure becomes 250.8 billion rubles, which is 3.2 percent of the GDP.<sup>62</sup> By his calculations, the budget is much closer to the amount of 3.5 percent of the GDP

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<sup>61</sup> Vitali Strugovets, "A Program of Stabilization," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, December 16, 2000. Article reviews author's interview with Duma Defense Committee Chairman General Andrei Nikolayev.

on spending for defense that was defined by President Yeltsin. Claiming special duty pay is no clearly defined process either. The procedures with which to claim combat pay are convoluted and confusing. Only the local commander can approve the "list" of those who have been operating in "counter-terrorist" operations. At times, his roster of soldiers who have served in Chechnya is cut short at an unidentified link in the chain of command.

Another response is to investigate and prosecute those responsible for skimming funds from the coffers. This has been done to some extent but more is needed. The head of the budget and finance department of the Russian Defense Ministry who has been charged with exceeding his authority has also been suspended pending an investigation. Colonel General Gen Georgi Oleynik and some other suspects had been involved in a multimillion-dollar deal between Russia and Ukraine.<sup>63</sup> Probably the most unlikely solution is closer cooperation between the executive and legislative branches; sharing the power over the military may help the Duma loosen their grip on the purse strings. Given Putin's method of handling the armed forces, such an agreement seems unlikely at present.

Taking a more radical approach to the military pay issue (though really, it concerns the entire budget of the armed forces), Generals Radionov and

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> "Putin Suspends Defense Ministry Budget Official Pending Probe," Interfax (Moscow), December 29, 2000.

Vladimirov drafted what they believe is the answer to the military budget crisis. Their proposal calls for a broad one percent "military tax," a bond drive of sorts to be undertaken and a \$3 billion loan to the military from the Central Bank of Russia.<sup>64</sup> The flaw in their plan lies in the already unpaid taxes in Russia, which are estimated at one trillion rubles - almost as much as the annual total the government aims to raise in taxes.<sup>65</sup> The 13 percent flat rate, passed at the beginning of 2001 through no small measure of work, would now become a 14 percent flat tax rate. While still fairly low compared to other countries, it would cause quite a bit of uproar from a public already fearful of their sons being drafted. Add to the mix a government still not fully prepared to fully track the delinquent taxpayers and the plan offered by the generals does not hold water.

The Russian military first and foremost needs to cease spending money on new equipment (for example, the 2002 budget increases the purchase of arms by 27 billion rubles).<sup>66</sup> One option would be to not purchase a generation of equipment, rather perform maintenance on the equipment now in service.<sup>67</sup> Use the money to "take care of the troops." Modern equipment in the hands of an untrained (due to funding) and downtrodden military is like throwing pearls to

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<sup>64</sup> Alena Nikolskaya, "Generals Demand \$3 Billion," *gazeta.ru*, February 20, 2001 as cited in JRL, No. 5106 (February 21, 2001).

<sup>65</sup> Amelia Gentleman, "Raising Taxes, Moscow Style - Children Are Recruited for Russia's Commando War on Tax Dodgers," *The Observer (UK)*, May 20, 2001, as cited in JRL, No. 5262 (May 20, 2001).

<sup>66</sup> "Russian Military Analysis: Russia Saves Money on Defense," trans. Pavel Pushkin.

swine. Moreover, the equipment that the armed forces manages to purchase will most likely end up in the hands of someone who isn't paid on time, enticed with "false bonuses" and who is likely to sell the equipment anyway to buy what they need for their family's survival.<sup>68</sup> Visions of having the biggest military in the world are not possible with current funding. Paying on time and paying the correct amount would be a start. Russia is renowned for improperly compensating its military members in a timely manner. At a crucial time when Russia is debating the creation of a professional army, and how much troops would be paid, it is doubtful that any potential recruits would believe official promises. Thousands of "ex-peacekeepers" are speaking out, demanding their back pay. The military understands the disastrous financial consequences this will have on both recruitment and retention. But as a result of the new revised runaway inflationary figures for 2002, there isn't enough money to fund this year's budget, let alone repay soldiers. Thus the lure of high pay for conscripts is a sham. The money announced by the president to fund pay increases is simply not there. Based on the debt owed to military members and the ghost bonuses, it is a fairy tale to believe otherwise. One thing is certain, one can be rest assured

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<sup>67</sup> Many of the United States Air Force's B-52 bombers that are flying today were built in the 1950s.

<sup>68</sup> For an interesting look at crime in the Russian military, see Graham H. Turberville, Jr., *Mafia in Uniform: The Criminalization of the Russian Armed Forces* (Fort Leavenworth Kansas: Foreign Military Studies Office, 1995).

that, on July 1, 2002, the tax, housing and utilities benefits will be cut. And the vacuum left by that cut will remain for a long while.

### Chapter Five - Indicator # 3: *Dedovshchina*

He was black-and-blue from his shoulder to his ankles because of the beatings he had been regularly subjected to. And he had been in hospital for two weeks. It was torture but the officers had warned him not to say anything.

Alla M. <sup>69</sup>

In the Russian military, the ill treatment bestowed upon new conscripts by senior personnel is as customary as military parades. Often likened to hazing, this behavior, known as *dedovshchina*, often times goes well beyond simple ridicule. *Esprit de corps* is not the goal of *dedovshchina*. Rather than breaking down individuals and building them back up as a cohesive unit (a desire of most military units), *dedovshchina* only serves to benefit the “deds.” The whole military system rests on the submission, immediate and unconditional in the Russian ranks, of one human to another. An order from someone senior in rank equals a law; thus the power of the senior is unlimited. Because conscripts answer to the whim of their sergeant, he is somewhat like a deity.

Such behavior is promulgated because those that suffered at the hands of the “deds”, eventually become “deds” themselves. Upon reaching that status, they can profit from their new position whether it be through financial income, material gain, or simply an ego boost. The occurrence of *dedovshchina* is not a new phenomenon to the Russian military. There are books that tell of the horrible



conditions faced by new recruits. One such book, written by a young recruit who served in the 1960s, explained the necessary details to pretend to be crazy in order to get out of the *dedovshchina* cycle.<sup>70</sup> A retired admiral claims that the military began to “fight this vice in the 1970’s at a time when this term [*dedovshchina*] did not even exist.”<sup>71</sup> One could argue that many militaries have their rites of passage to endure. For example, the United States military would pin “blood wings” on those who had earned their jump qualifications. The process involved removing the clasps from the steel pin and with a swift punch, pounding the insignia into the person’s chest. As odd as this sounds, it promoted unity and formed a common bond between the members of that group.

Because the victims are low ranking, the poor treatment regularly goes uninvestigated. Many conscripts simply let the brutality go on because they know the “deds” have more influence than they do in front of their commanders. Of those instances that are investigated, the senior member is usually believed over the conscript. Most often one will find the conscript accusing the “ded” by themselves. Few people want to act as witnesses to the incident for fear of

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<sup>69</sup> A mother of a young conscript. See Ian Traynor, “Russian Mothers Mobilize Against Chechnya Campaign,” *The Guardian*, February 3, 2000.

<sup>70</sup> See Ivan Papadin, *Teach Yourself to be a Madman: Memories of a Young Russian Soldier* (Burning Bush Publishing, 1993).

<sup>71</sup> Aleksandr Sabov, “The Admiral on the Shore,” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, December 7, 2001, p 9. This is the author’s interview with the dismissed Russian Northern Fleet Commander, Admiral Vyacheslav Popov. Interestingly, President Putin appointed Admiral Popov as chief of the Administration for Environment and Decommissioning of Nuclear Facilities at the Ministry of Atomic Energy shortly after his dismissal from the Northern Fleet (some say his dismissal was punishment for the Kursk tragedy).

reprisal. Nonetheless, some cases of *dedovshchina* are tried and have good results. For example, in August 1999, a private from a North Caucasus Military District military unit committed suicide by hanging himself with a belt. That same day, the garrison procurator opened a case against two privates on the installation. They had reportedly beat up the private, who subsequently took his life, on a daily basis. They would force him to wash their uniforms, sew on under collars, beg for cigarettes from passers-by and give the cigarettes to them. Other accusations included using him as a servant to bring them food and most certainly they would take his money. The case was sent to a military court and they were convicted and punished. One more example of the prosecution of a “ded” involves another suicide. In 1999, a young private, having endured beatings and humiliations by his sergeant, took his life. A military court sentenced the sergeant to lengthy imprisonment for what he did.<sup>72</sup> Certainly justice was served but a life is still gone for no reason.

Conscripts bear the brunt of ingrained corruption and in some cases are sold out for “services of varying legitimacy.” At one defense ministry base in Moscow, conscripts have been forced into male prostitution, according to the Union of the Committees of Soldier’s Mothers of Russia, which has received at

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<sup>72</sup> For both examples see Yuriy Ivanovich Chizhikov, “I Hope the State Will Pay My Wife Everything it Owes Me”: This Phrase is Becoming Typical of Officers’ Suicide Notes” *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, No. 48, December 10-16, 1999, p 7.

least 14 complaints from conscripts asking to be transferred.<sup>73</sup> “The commanders force me to go home each month and collect money for them,” one conscript notes while his brother elaborates, “If he doesn’t return, he’s a deserter; if he comes back empty-handed, they’ll make him an invalid.”<sup>74</sup> *Dedovshchina* has a tremendous impact on the young conscript. Some beatings have been so severe as to have resulted in the death of conscripts. Sadly, it seems the cases that receive the most serious attention are those where there is a death. For those conscripts hospitalized for a week and who, through severe beatings, have become handicapped, the prospects for court cases are less likely. Although the statistics indicate that barracks beatings and fights have become more rare, in the first half of 1999, 987 of such cases indicated the quite firmly established tradition of fights in the Russian military, which frequently end with the death of one or more participants.

“There are some interesting figures which show that about a quarter of all cases before the military prosecutor are linked to violence inside the barracks.” Russia’s armed forces have inherited from the Soviet Red Army an unenviable reputation for violent hazing of recruits. The Committee of Soldier’s Mothers of Russia estimates 3,500 conscripts die each year from beatings, malnutrition and disease. Defense analysts say violence is bound to occur in a system that recruits

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<sup>73</sup> Eve Conant, “Remaking The Army,” *Newsweek*, February 18, 2002, Vol. 139, Issue 7, p. 14,

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

men with criminal records, acute psychological problems and the educationally sub-normal.<sup>75</sup>

Such a horrible existence leads some conscripts to take their own life. According to Colonel of Justice Chizhikov, chief of Section for Oversight of Investigation of Criminal Cases Involving Deaths, Suicides and Nonregulation Manifestations, the reasons for suicides by conscripted servicemen include the humiliations and beatings they regularly receive.<sup>76</sup>

*Dedovshchina* decreases morale and destroys unit cohesion. A combat unit is based on trust and respect. There is no psychological way that, after enduring the *dedovshchina* tradition, conscripts of a unit could trust, must less respect those in the leadership positions of their unit. Without those bonds a unit is not nearly as combat effective, if they are at all. Imagine the conscript in Chechnya seeing his sergeant pinned down by enemy fire. His options are to help him by providing cover fire or hope the bullets hit him. After being submitted to that man's cruel, inhuman torture (perhaps even rape or the death of his fellow conscript), the chances for the conscript hoping the enemy kills the sergeant are pretty high. That is not the kind of unit in which one would like to serve.

Violence of this kind fuels revenge beatings or even killings. Some conscripts salivate at the opportunity to catch a "ded" off guard and alone. There

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<sup>75</sup> Jon Boyle, "Rampages Ignite Russian Debate on Army Reform," Reuters (Moscow), February 17, 2002, as cited in JRL, No. 6082 (February 17, 2002).

<sup>76</sup> Chizhikov, p. 7.

have also been incidents where conscripts have broken into weapons storage areas and gone on rampages with the sole intent on killing those who batter them (some have been beaten to the point of hospitalization). Many conscripts simply "loose it." They loose all ability to function and reason after having suffered through the trauma of *dedovshchina*. Mental breakdowns are common but sadly only put the conscript into more danger. Russian military psychiatric wards are not known for their peaceful environments.

Many young men know about *dedovshchina* because of the extensive coverage given by the press and the soldier's rights groups. Additionally, young men who have completed their service relate stories of their torture.

*Dedovshchina* is a widely cited reason for the lack of desire to serve in the military and most certainly promotes draft evasion. In the first half of 1995, 3,000 Russian conscripts deserted from fear of falling victim to hazing.<sup>77</sup> The nongovernmental Soldiers' Mothers of St. Petersburg organization recorded approximately thousands of instances of conscripts being the victims of beatings, torture, and hazing.

Some suggest that a transition to a professional military would wipe out *dedovshchina*; because the current system brings in fresh conscripts every six months the other conscripts obtain the "ded" status. The supposition is that the influx of new soldiers would be steady, which would allow for common training

while gaining seniority together.<sup>78</sup> Taking such a position reveals a misunderstanding of the military system and is fundamentally wrong. The essence of a military system is hierarchical. Within the armed forces there will always be seniors and juniors. Even among those of the same rank, there is a distinction based on time in service. The military needs this structure to function, to work its system of giving and receiving orders; in any kind of military (professional included) subordination is vital. In professional militaries there are unscrupulous people who exert their will over others for their own gain through physical intimidation or mental harassment. Subordination and senior rank are not the problems. The governmental and military leadership's acceptance through inaction is the predicament. Therefore, were Russia's armed forces to be completely professional, *dedovshchina* could still exist meaning professionalism is not the key to ending it.

To curb, much less control, *dedovshchina*, there is only one real solution. There needs to be a complete crackdown from top military and political leadership. They must demand it stop. Without that support, the Committee for Soldier's Mothers and other such rights-oriented groups will have no chance to end the violence. According to Colonel-General Vladimir Kulakov, chief of the Main Educational Work Directorate, organizational and educational steps are

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<sup>77</sup> See Vladimir Mikheyev, "Strasbourg Is Fostering New Democracies in Eastern Europe," *Moscow Izvestiya*, January 28, 1998, pp. 1, 3.

being taken that eliminate social tension in the troops and promote the formation of a sense of responsibility among the majority of servicemen for the accomplishment of their assigned missions. He noted some positive progress toward the stabilization of military discipline and law and order among the troops in 1998. The total number of crimes and incidents was reduced by 2.8 percent though there was an increase of cases (by 46.3 percent) where regulations were broken. This increase can most likely be attributed to new accountability procedures. The military ceased punishing unit commanders where regulations were broken or crimes were committed. This in turn increased commander involvement to investigate and report such issues.<sup>79</sup>

*Dedovshchina* owes its existence to complacency at the highest levels. Senior political and military leadership must unequivocally demand it stop. One general feels certain that lazy officers are one of the causes of "*dedovshchina*". When he was a commander and initially slept in the barracks, he claims was fully aware of all cases of "*dedovshchina*". He said there aren't bad soldiers; there are only bad officers.<sup>80</sup> While Colonel Chizhikov, excuses the officers' involvement as one reason for the environment of *dedovshchina* because of the junior commanders' lack of desire (and at times also their inability) to properly react to

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<sup>78</sup> See Lance Craig Erickson, *Burden of Service: The Russian Military*, Masters Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2001, p. 76.

<sup>79</sup> Dmitriy Litovkin, "The Offensive Against *Dedovshchina*," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, January 23, 1999, p. 1.

signs of nonregulation relationships.<sup>81</sup> It is one admiral's contention that *dedovshchina* manifests itself in the military but the true source is society and the family.<sup>82</sup>

Serious investigation and prosecution of those who perpetrate *dedovshchina* is needed. A group of Duma deputies is doing just that. They have prepared legislation that will radically increase the penalties for crimes committed in the military. Under its terms, deserters would be punished by up to 15 years in prison; those found guilty of disobedience or inciting others to disobedience could receive the death penalty, and violators of military discipline or the mistreatment of other servicemen (as in "*dedovshchina*") could be sentenced from 15 years in prison to the death penalty.<sup>83</sup>

Because they won't curb or control it, *dedovshchina* is the best example of the Russian government's disdain for the military. It is clearly no secret that this activity occurs yet for unknown reasons the government does little to halt the practice. The convening of token trials when there is a death is about the only thing done; and that is arguably too late. The saddest thing about *dedovshchina* is that it is useless - it serves absolutely no purpose. There is no unit morale built,

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<sup>80</sup> Kirill Dybskiy, "We're Not Ready to Repeal the Death Penalty: Crime Wave Rolls Over Russian Army," *Segodnya*, May 7, 1999, p. 7. The article is an interview with General Lieutenant Mikhail Kislitsyn, military procurator of the Moscow Military District.

<sup>81</sup> Chizhikov, p. 7.

<sup>82</sup> Sabov, p. 9.

<sup>83</sup> "Duma May Impose Harsher Penalties For Military Crimes," ITAR-TASS, 22 September 2001, as cited by *RFE/RL Newslines*, Part I, Vol. 5, No. 181, (24 September 2001).



no loyalty fostered and certainly there is no trust earned. *Dedovshchina* serves to turn young men against military service, harden those that enter the armed forces and sometime physically cripple or kill youth in a country whose population needs every one it can get.

## **Chapter Six - Indicator # 4: The Conscription Program**

The young men that are forced to serve in the Army today are not good soldiers, and would rather dodge their duties than carry them out. I don't want [my younger brother] to serve in the Army because I am afraid of the damage it could do to him.

Yulia Yevdokimova, saleswoman<sup>84</sup>

According to the 1993 Russian constitution, all Russian males between the ages of 18-27 are obligated to serve in the armed forces. In 1995, the Duma amended the law extending the duration of service from 18 months to two years (or three years if serving in the navy). The draft can be deferred or avoided by academia and, bribery of the right official. This means that young men from poorer families who are not well connected are the ones who actually report to the draft commissions. The conscription strategy in Russia is riddled with problems.

For the low ranking soldier, military service is a form of legalized slave labor. Many conscripts are forced to work in the fields, digging up potatoes or pouring asphalt and concrete for private Russian companies. For the young conscript in the navy, working on a private company's oilrig is not uncommon while the air force offers their conscripts to package delivery companies. One conscript though not serving in the North Caucasus but in "peaceful" Volgograd Oblast works (along with 15 other draftees) 14-hour days of hard physical labor

on a watermelon plantation; he wrote his mother saying that during his time there two soldiers had already died.<sup>85</sup>

As Russia's population continues to decline, the number of eligible young men shrinks. There are several causes for the population decrease but the main explanations are a birth rate that is in a negative tailspin, alcoholism and social diseases. Some figures cite the decline will be as much as a million people per year and that Russia could lose one third of its population (now 146 million) by the middle of the century.<sup>86</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) agrees and has assessed the demographic situation in Russia as "critical." Experts within the WHO predict that by the year 2015 the population of Russia might drop to 130 million people.<sup>87</sup> The Chief of the Main Organization and Mobilization Directorate of the General Staff, Colonel-General Vladislav Putilin stated that by 2010 the draft system that exists today will cease to meet requirements.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> "RJ Street Poll: Would Russia benefit from having a professional army?" *The Russia Journal*, Vol 4, No. 48, December 7-13, 2001, p 32.

<sup>85</sup> See JAC, RFE/RL Newslines, Part I, Vol. 5, No. 186, October 2, 2001.

<sup>86</sup> See Jeffrey Tayler and W.S. Merwin, "Russia Is Finished," *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 287, Issue 5, May 2001, p. 50. See also *Demograficheskii Eshegodnik Rossii (Goskomstat Rossii: Statisticheskii Sbornik, 1999)*, p. 42.

<sup>87</sup> See ITAR-TASS (Moscow), "Demographic situation in Russia nears critical level," February 2, 2002, as cited in JRL, No. 5070 (February 3, 2001).

<sup>88</sup> See Colonel-General Putilin, "The shortage of servicemen facing armed forces by 2010 owing to inability of current conscription method to secure sufficient numbers of suitable servicemen," *Izvestiya*, October 5, 2001.

There are several symptoms resulting in the government's inability to actually fill the needs of the armed forces.<sup>89</sup> First and foremost is the general unwillingness to participate in the call up. Draft avoidance is a persistent problem that seriously complicates the conscription campaigns with many young men (and their families) questioning the true need for mandatory service. In the spring of 2000, over 27,700 young people evaded conscription, which is nearly 10,000 more than in the spring of 1999 and 14.5 percent of the 2000 spring conscription plan.<sup>90</sup>

One cause for high numbers of draft evaders is the war in Chechnya and the unabashed use of ill-trained conscripts in that campaign. Conscripted servicemen can be assigned to participate in combat only after they have served for at least six months, and after they have qualified in a military occupational specialty. The other type of training is done in the unit itself for those conscripts not requiring special equipment and materiel. In a unit that conducts regular combat training, 6 months is deemed a sufficient for a conscript to become proficient in his duty specialty.<sup>91</sup> However, during the six months one conscript served before being sent to Chechnya, he was taken only twice to the firing range,

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<sup>89</sup> In addition to the armed forces, draftees may be assigned to the Russian Federal Border Service, the ministry of interior, and other forces of agencies that require military style duty. These organizations, excepting the armed forces, are known as multiple militaries.

<sup>90</sup> General Lieutenant Vasili Volgushev, "Conscription Plan Fulfilled But Problems Persist," *Voyeninform Military News Bulletin for October 2000* *Voyeninform Military News Agency*, November 8, 2000.

where he was given just 18 bullets with which to practice. When he arrived in Chechnya, his officer told his squad, "A soldier must die; that is his role in life – he must die for his officers, especially in times of war."<sup>92</sup> The Russian Committee of Soldiers' Mothers claims that between August and November 1999, about 600 Russian servicemen, most of them raw recruits, died in North Caucasus.<sup>93</sup> These activists also claim that new recruits continue to be sent to the war in Chechnya. The committee's co-chairwoman Valentina Melnikova said it is those with up to six months of army service that make up the bulk of the casualties.<sup>94</sup> Overall estimates from the soldiers' mothers' organizations estimate that thousands of conscripts have been killed or wounded in Chechnya.<sup>95</sup> Those protection groups also cite the penchant for *dedovshchina* as another factor for draft evasion. Though for more specific information on that subject see chapter five of this thesis.

Adding to the troubles involving mandatory military service are the numerous ways in which to "legally" avoid the draft (as opposed to outright dodging it by physically hiding or leaving the country). Defense Minister Ivanov

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<sup>91</sup> Oleg Falichev, "Call-up 2000. Selection Of Contract Soldiers Will be More Rigorous," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, October 12, 2000. Interview of Chief of the General Staff's Main Organizational/Mobilization Directorate, General Colonel Vladislav Putilin.

<sup>92</sup> Amelia Gentleman, "Deserter 'hated the whole system,'" *The Russia Journal*, No. 5, February 14, 2000, p. 21.

<sup>93</sup> "Soldiers' Mothers Say 600 Servicemen Lost in Caucasus," Interfax (Moscow) November 26, 1999.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> DPA (Moscow), "Russian Generals Defend Conscript Army to the Last," *Russia Weekly*, January 31, 2002 as cited in Center for Defense Information, No. 192 (February 1, 2002).

admitted that the military manages to call up no more than 13 percent of the young men eligible for service in the armed forces.<sup>96</sup> Closely aligning with the president's figures, General Vyacheslav Putilin, head of General Headquarters' Chief Recruitment Department, says 88 percent of young men who are called up get their service deferred.<sup>97</sup> Obligatory military service does not apply to everyone in Russia.

There are quite a few loopholes with which young men may avoid the conscription call up. Potential conscripts may be medically excused (whether physical or mental) from service. More than half of young Russian men who reach draft age are turned away on account of poor health. Another excuse from conscription is family related. Married men, especially if they have two children, are exempt from military service. Also exempt are those men who are the sole support for a single parent. There are instances of couples getting divorced strictly for their son's benefit; he can claim to be their sole support and avoid conscription. An additional way to avoid conscription, though sometimes it just delays the inevitable, is to invoke an educationally related deferment. For example, many young men opt for "temporary" enrollment in elite officer-training academies, intended to provide education to those planning a military career (thus exempting students from conscription as low-level recruits).

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<sup>96</sup> Alexander Golts, "Death Outside the Firing Line For Russian Army," *The Russia Journal*, No.30, August 3, 2001, p. 8.

In the past, many left the institutions after just two or three years, fulfilling their compulsory service, receiving an education and joining private business or civilian colleges. However, that loophole has been tightened because Military Service Law now provides a disincentive for such maneuvers by equating one year of compulsory service with two years in a military school. Young men do not have to attend a Military institution though. Being a student at a private civilian or business college, university students are exempt from the draft and very rarely end up in the army after graduation. Bribery is yet another option and is quite popular. A lump payment of \$3,000 to \$7,000 placed in the correct pocket can ensure exclusion from the draft. And almost without exception, this exclusion is permanent. One of the lesser-known escapes from the conscription effort is job related. Clergymen may, by a decision of the president, be granted deferment from conscription into military service in peacetime.

For those that physically hide from the draft authorities, wherever that may be, few of them are caught and even fewer of those are actually prosecuted. Those at the *voenkomats* who are responsible for reporting violations, as a rule, completely put off their duties to send draft dodging information to the office of the military prosecutor and to the military commissar. As a result, more than

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<sup>97</sup> Alexander Golts, "Why the Generals Don't Want a Professional Army," *The Russia Journal*, No.15 April 20, 2001, p. 8.

2,300 persons, almost an entire regiment, were evading the draft in Saratov Oblast alone.<sup>98</sup>

The current conscription program has a couple of negative effects on the military. Many undesirable or uneducated young men enter the military, while those with money or scholastic ability often escape mobilization. As in the case of a young conscript stationed on the island of Sakhalin who, in 1998, killed seven servicemen (including his commander). Widespread draft evasion means the military takes young men with a history of mental illnesses or drug abuse. As in this case, the military was unaware that the conscript had been a drug addict since age 13 in addition to having a criminal background; on the day of his rampage, he sniffed glue and was acting under its influence.<sup>99</sup>

The qualitative indicators of the young conscripts are decreasing. Some 38 percent of the recruits coming to serve in the autumn 1996 call-up had only an incomplete high-school education while 30 percent had had trouble with the police.<sup>100</sup> One encounters those who do not know how to read and write at all. They have to be taught elementary literacy before being entrusted with combat

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<sup>98</sup> See Aleksandr Bugay and Oleg Bedula, "Who is Replenishing the Army?" *Krasnaya Zvezda*, November 25, 2000.

<sup>99</sup> "Russian Conscript Gets Life for Killing Seven Comrades," *The Russia Journal*, No. 20, May 25, 2001, p 28.

<sup>100</sup> Vladimir Matyash, "The Transbaykal Is a Harsh Place. Is the State, Which Is Called Upon To Concern Itself With Those Who Are Serving There, Taking This Into Account?" *Krasnaya Zvezda*, December 16, 1996.



materiel.<sup>101</sup> Unfortunately, a lowering of the intellectual potential of the inductees has been observed in recent years. In 2000, the number of young soldiers having higher education decreased from 3.1 percent to 1.117 percent and the number of those with middle professional [education] decreased from 25 percent to 15.6 percent.<sup>102</sup> The issue of learning a foreign language used to be a barrier for the Soviet military. With so many different ethnic groups comprising the USSR, a working use of Russian was necessary for those whose native tongue was different. Today, the barrier is not listening so much as it is reading and understanding operations manuals and written procedures. With equipment becoming more sophisticated, save for the rifle-carrying grunt, a rudimentary ability to read is more critical than ever.

Another negative effect of the conscription program is the increasingly unpopular street and subway “sweeps” for suspected draft evaders. These are becoming more commonplace and ever more ripe with human rights violations fostering anti-military sentiment. During such round-ups military officials stop young males suspected of being subject to conscription and forcibly escort them to the local military commissariat (*voenkomat*) for induction into the military. Many times the responsible military officials do not follow applicable regulations and include youths who have valid draft deferments, denying them the opportunity to notify their parents, a lawyer, or human rights advocates. Two

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<sup>101</sup> Matyash.

examples of the extreme include one young man who was netted with these sweeps and sent to a military unit despite his medical maladies including pneumonia, tonsillitis, pancreatitis, and internal bleeding hemorrhoids. While another young man who has progressing blindness, was stopped on the street, delivered to a military enlistment office, declared medically fit and shipped off to a military unit only a month before his prescheduled surgery to help slow the deterioration of his eyesight.<sup>103</sup> To avoid the door-to-door sweeps, some draft evaders do not spend the night at home. Instead they stay at a friend's apartment, or at some unrelated person's dacha in the country, or rent rooms in different city districts.<sup>104</sup>

The possible solutions are numerous. While some tout alternative service as a cure for the afflictions of conscription, it is doubtful that it will really solve its problems. Several Duma deputies (such as Boris Nadezhdin and Eduard Vorobyev) believe all of the extremes for avoiding service (bribery, evasion, etc.) can be avoided if a standard is written into the law on alternative service with the means for performing it. The Constitution provides for the ability to refuse to serve in the military because of one's beliefs or because one's religion forbids it. But there is currently no method approved for its regulation - one has the right but

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<sup>102</sup> Aleksandr Bugay and Oleg Bedula.

<sup>103</sup> Yevgeniy Chubarov, "Raids Launched On Sick Draftees," *Izvestiya* December 19, 2001.

<sup>104</sup> Richard F. Staar, *The New Military in Russia: Ten Myths that Shape the Image* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1996), p. 64.

there is no way to enable that right.<sup>105</sup> On the issue of the longevity of Alternative Service, I have to agree with Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Duma deputy speaker. It seems likely that even if a law on alternative service is adopted, it won't last long. Zhirinovskiy said, "They'll pass the law, but I assure you that within a year, there will be utter disillusionment and young men will be embarrassed to tell others they cleaned bed pans all day."<sup>106</sup> The other sticking point to the current proposal before the parliament is that the length of service is twice as long as the required time for a conscript. Those opting for alternative service will have to commit to four years instead of two (or three in the navy). However, there has been limited success, though be it illegal. Nine pacifists were the first Russians to win the right to substitute civil service for time in the military. Authorities in Nizhny Novgorod allowed the men to work in a local hospital.<sup>107</sup> From all appearances, the program is going well.

One option to address the problem of conscription is to reduce the length of time a conscript serves. There are proposals before the Duma and ministries of the government advocating the reduction in time of conscripted service. The most ambitious calls for a six-month period of conscription with an option to continue under contract should the desire exist. During the six month period, time would

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<sup>105</sup> Mikhail Vinogradov, "On Alternative Civil Service Legislation to be Offered in the State Duma: 'Pastry Chef Without A Uniform,'" *Izvestiya*, December 6, 2001.

<sup>106</sup> "Zhirinovskiy questions staying power of law on alternative service," ITAR-TASS (Moscow), February 14, 2002.

<sup>107</sup> See "Facts and Figures," *Russian Life*, November/December 2001, p 7.

be spent training the conscript in a specialty field and education them on the use of military hardware. Proponents of the recommendation say that the reduction in time of service plus the added guarantee that the conscript will not be sent to Chechnya would reduce draft evasion tremendously. At the same time it would bolster the reserve forces of the armed forces. Those opposing the reduction of conscription time say that, for some weapon systems (such as anti-aircraft missile equipment), six months won't come close to making them proficient on its use. Moreover, there is no plan to ensure their training would stay current.

Nay sayers against the proposal to reduce conscription time believe that for any size of the armed forces and other troops, be it 300,000 to 1 million people, all of the privates would have to be recruited in one call-up. At present, for example, with the military's current strength, the privates and sergeants are recruited in the draft proceeding from the two-year length of service. If every draft calls up around 200,000 young people (very roughly) and they were to serve only six months, the call up would need to be 800,000 people (200,000 multiplied by four) in every draft.<sup>108</sup> Those against the time reduction believe during each draft an entire military would have to be recruited, which in turn would be disbanded in half a year.

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<sup>108</sup> See Yelizaveta Mayetnaya's article "The Operation 'Draft.' To Serve or Not To Serve? If So, How Long?" *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, October 25, 2001. In it she details her interview with Alexei Arbatov, deputy chairman of the State Duma Defense Committee.

The government needs to abide by the law and cease sending fresh conscripts into battle zones. In order to avoid the issue of using fresh, untrained conscripts in Chechnya, the government has yet to truly define what is going on there (war, internal conflict, etc) or the status of the servicemen involved in the conflict. A definition would help, among other things, determine which ministry should be involved and resolve the use of conscripts on that territory. However the September 27, 1999 edict called the combat operations in Chechnya an antiterrorist operation.<sup>109</sup> Only exacerbating the issue, in May 2001, Defense Minister Ivanov cancelled a plan to cut the number of Russian ground troops in Chechnya from 80,000 to 20,000; only 5,000 soldiers went home.<sup>110</sup>

One idea worth mentioning if only because of its lunacy involves the legalization of bribes. The defense ministry of Georgia suggested charging for the postponement of military service. Their unique idea states that a delay of conscription might cost recruits \$200 while complete freedom from military service will cost only \$1,000, making everything official and without corruption.<sup>111</sup> This would only balloon the problem of those with money being

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<sup>109</sup> The decree was presidential edict number 1155. See Aleksandr Shaburkin, "Halfway to Grozny: Military Personnel in Chechnya Are not Receiving Money and Fear a Repeat of the Events of 1995-1996," *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, October 22, 1999.

<sup>110</sup> Scott Peterson, "Defiance Of Russia Only Deepens In Chechnya," *Christian Science Monitor*, Vol. 93 Issue 124, May 22, 2001, p. 1.

<sup>111</sup> Leonid Bukatin and Pavel Voloshin, "Five Regiments Of Deserters, as long as the Whole Society is Ill, it is Useless to Treat The Army Only" *Novaya Gazeta*, No. 49, trans. by Arina Yevtikhova, (July 9-11, 2001) as cited in JRL, No. 5348 (July 16, 2001).

able to get out of military service while the poor would have to serve. One wonders what Vladimir Lenin would say about such a prospect.

Russia needs to establish a more accurate way to track evaders and endorse tougher sentences for those that do evade. If there is truly going to be mandatory service then it should apply to all. It shouldn't be limited to those who aren't clever or wealthy enough to successfully evade. The *voenkomat* has the ability to initially trace those suspected of draft evasion. Laziness, contempt for the system and the ever-present bribe keeps them from actually performing their job.

End the draft all together and fully endorse (at all levels) a professional military - conscription and a reduction of forces seem to be at odds with each other. This is by far, the most widely praised solution to fix not only the conscription problems, but also all of the other woes faced by the military. The problem lies in the financing of such an undertaking. Not only would the salary of a contract soldier be more monetarily burdening but also the improvements to housing and equipment used would cause the finance ministry to drop its jaw. This is not to say that a professional military is a pipe dream that has no merit. Though it would solve the problems associated with conscription, it would most likely give rise to other problems and itself become an obstruction to reform.

All of this means that conscription will, most likely, continue as it does now. Yet when the population of potential draftees becomes too small to support

the draft, the governmental and military leaders will hastily enact weak rules and regulation as stopgap measures. It is doubtful that even in those times, will they do anything other than ponder.

## Conclusion

In the end, Putin has not defined exactly what kind of armed forces he wants to create. At first the apparent idea was to build a compact and effective army, but at the same time, the president is calling for increased mobilization preparedness. This means that, as in Soviet times, the country is depending on a mass army that can mobilize millions of reservists and rely on quantity rather than quality to fulfill its military missions.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, The creation of a professional army will require a new infrastructure, “you won’t be able to herd contractors into barracks”, and full-fledged military cities will be needed.<sup>113</sup> Military reform has been a promise for years but 2001 saw some organizational changes though they were fairly superficial. The changes did not ultimately address the core trouble. Failure to reform decisively early on means not only that the Russian military is ill prepared to defend the country against the real threats it may face (particularly regional and internal conflicts as evidenced in Chechnya), but also that reform will be more expensive and take longer than it need have.<sup>114</sup>

The four indicators illuminate the Russian military troubles that the political and defense leadership discount. The issue of conscription is still hotly debated.

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<sup>112</sup> Alexander Golts, “Contradictory message for Russia’s generals,” *The Russia Journal*, No. 45, November 16, 2001, p. 19.

<sup>113</sup> Valeriy Batuyev, “Putin’s plan for an all-volunteer force will lead to the breakdown of Russia’s military,” *Vremya*, November, 23 2001. Article is an interview with Andrei Nikolayev, chairman of the Duma Defense Committee.



To loose that huge pool of bodies means limiting the power wielded by the military's top brass, as it is essentially their slave labor. While on the other hand, numerous groups have arisen to fight for an end to conscription. Realistically, a program that poorly trains young men, barely feeds them, offers them little to no housing, sends them to units to get beaten up or worse, has less and have a high likelihood of being sent into combat, has little chance for support in the non-military world.

Nevertheless, President Putin has long touted what President Yeltsin decreed then rescinded, that conscription will cease for the Russian military. However, President Putin is more correct in telling of the end of conscription (more so than his predecessor). It should be noted though that his statements are akin to saying that he will make the sun rise or the tides flow. Much like the forces of nature, he has no control over the cessation of conscription. With the incredible decline in the Russian population and a negative population growth, the available number of males of conscription will reduce in size from what the government has enjoyed in the past.

Realistically, the easiest and least costly indicator to address is *dedovshchina*. While housing and military pay issues to an extent depend on finances, *dedovshchina* does not. The existence of *dedovshchina* is not a secret. Ending that practice takes little more than political will and might without huge financial

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<sup>114</sup> The Russia Journal, "The Russian military's exercises in futility," as cited in JRL, No. 5116

outlay. It is practically cost free to correct the problem. Nothing is gained by its existence; on the contrary, much is lost by it. *Dedovshchina* harmfully affects conscription, recruiting, morale, unit cohesion, military readiness and literally generations of young men. For the young conscript to suffer what he does at the hands of those over him who are there to lead and train him, is simply heartless and cruel. Its eradication is crucial to the reform of the military and as long as it exists there is no way for Russia's armed forces to becoming an effective fighting organization.

Serious reform may be impossible in many circumstances in Russia but the four indicators examined here show that true reform is not wanted and thus demonstrate the military disregard by the Russian government. However, military leadership laments the loss of social prestige for military officers. Yet they do nothing to abate the problems themselves. Fetid living conditions or seeing a captain from the local regiment waiting on tables does little to enhance social status or project an inspiring image.

This thesis does not suggest that the woes in the ministry of defense are unique to the military alone. With respect to the four indicators studied here, inadequate housing and late pay are not only found in the armed forces. Conscription also affects both the civilian and military sector of Russian society. The only truly distinctively military indicator is that of *dedovshchina*. That does

not erode the argument that the government does not want for military reform. The evidence plainly shows this to be true. As demonstrated, the ministry of defense is usually owed 16 times as much as any other ministry. Moreover, the military does have housing construction units with which they could repair some of the housing units or make more strides towards constructing new ones.

Russia's governmental and political leaders should give up, if temporarily, the notion that they are a great military superpower.<sup>115</sup> Their words profess one thing yet their idle responses prove another. Through the government's inaction, they have psychologically subdued their own troops to the point of ineffectiveness should they be called upon. As the world has seen in Chechnya, a band of guerilla fighters is killing scores of military troops once associated with one of the most powerful militaries on the planet. What is badly needed is social and economic reform on the lowest levels. Maintaining an expensive and inefficient military is not what Russia needs. For the near term, the country must step away from the big table and focus on their internal problems. Allotting more than minimum resources to the military will only slow if not stop Russia's armed forces from climbing out of its quagmire. Most certainly, the focus should be on

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<sup>115</sup> Of course, the possession of nuclear weapons makes them a force to consider in their own right. This does not change the fact that Russia would almost certainly need to use tactical nuclear weapons to defeat an aggressor or enemy of any significant strength; their conventional forces could most certainly be overwhelmed by several of the world's militaries by themselves. For an interesting report on the new American policy agenda toward Russia (which discusses, among many other things, Russia's tactical nuclear weapon option, see The Nixon Center's "What Is To Be Undone? A Russia Policy Agenda For The New Administration," February 2001, as cited in JRL, No. 5094 (February 15, 2001).

the social despair of the everyday person in the military. It is necessary to treat them with a little dignity, respect and pride by providing merely the basics of life. Even if Russia were able to buy unlimited, sophisticated hardware for its military, yet it still chose to ignore the four indicators analyzed here, it would have a well equipped yet unmotivated, demoralized and still incapable force.

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## Vita

Kevin J. Thrash was born in Bethpage, New York on March 1, 1966. His father, [REDACTED] worked in the airline and travel industries as well as in the computer field. His mother, [REDACTED] also worked in the airline and travel industries, then later worked as an office manager and in the employment of the United States Federal government. His sister, [REDACTED] married [REDACTED] and currently works in the real estate business. His other sister, [REDACTED] married [REDACTED] and works as a hospital advisor. [REDACTED] is married to [REDACTED] and they are the very proud parents of a son named [REDACTED]. After graduating from Huffman High School, Birmingham, Alabama, in 1984 he attended the University of South Alabama in Mobile, Alabama. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Russian Language and Studies in 1988. In 1994, he earned a Bachelor's plus at the Defense Intelligence College in Washington, D.C. His service as a United States Air Force officer began in 1989. His tours of duty include assignments in Germany, Texas, Illinois, and Washington, D.C. He is also a veteran of Operation Desert Storm. In August 2000, he entered the Graduate School at University of Texas at Austin.

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